

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9671

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, EI, UK

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR SHANNON'S VISIT TO CONSECRATION OF NEW
IRISH PRIMATE.

1. I ACCEPT THE DEPARTMENT'S DECISION THAT I SHOULD NOT ATTEND
THE CONSECRATION OF MONSEIGNOR O FIAICH. FOR THE RECORD I
WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A FEW COMMENTS.

2. THE NON-ATTENDANCE OF THE U.S. AMBASSADOR TO IRELAND AT
THE CONSECRATION OF THE PRIMATE OF ALL IRELAND WILL CERTAINLY
BE NOTED AS A STRANGE AND REGRETTABLE LAPSE. THE SEE OF
ARMAGH HAS EXISTED FOR CENTURIES AND ITS HISTORIC BOUNDARIES
CUT ACROSS THE BORDER BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC AND THE NORTH. AS
YOU KNOW, THE CATHOLIC CHURCH HAS NEVER RECOGNIZED THE NORTH-
SOUTH DIVISION IN ORDERING ITS OWN AFFAIRS. THUS, MONSEIGNOR
O FIAICH WILL NOT ONLY BECOME ARCHBISHOP OF ARMAGH BUT ALSO
AT THE NEXT CONSISTORY IN ROME WILL BECOME IRELAND'S ONLY
CARDINAL. BY CUSTOM, HE WILL BE ELECTED CHAIRMAN OF THE
NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF IRISH BISHOPS AND WILL PRESIDE
AT THEIR MONTHLY MEETINGS IN DUBLIN. BECAUSE OF THE
PERVASIVE INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH IN IRELAND, HE WILL
BE THE SECOND MOST POWERFUL MAN IN THIS COUNTRY, OUTRANKED
ONLY BY THE TAOISEACH, MR. LYNCH. HIS INFLUENCE ON THE

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COURSE OF EVENTS IN THIS COUNTRY AND IN THE NORTH IS
LIKELY TO BE HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT. FOR ALL THESE REASONS,
HIS CONSECRATION IS ONE OF THE MAJOR IRISH EVENTS OF THE
DECADE. THIS IS SYMBOLIZED BY THE FACT THAT MR. LYNCH
AND MOST OF THE MEMBERS OF THE IRISH CABINET PLAN TO
ATTEND. NO ONE IMAGINES THAT PRIME MINISTER CALLAGHAN
AND MOST OF THE BRITISH CABINET WOULD DREAM OF GOING. I

ALSO DOUBT THAT AMBASSADOR BREWSTER HAS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED ATTENDING.

3. THE ARCHBISHOP-DESIGNATE INVITED ME BY MAIL. BEFORE I HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO REPLY, HE RENEWED THE INVITATION IN PERSON WHEN WE CHATTED ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, AT THE GAME BETWEEN ARMAGH AND DUBLIN FOR THE ALL-IRELAND FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP.

4. THE DEPARTMENT IS UNDERSTANDABLY CONCERNED WITH POSSIBLE BRITISH DISCOMFORT THAT MIGHT ACCRUE IF MY VISIT HAD BEEN MISCONSTRUED AS SOME NEW TACK IN U.S. POLICY VIS-A-VIS NORTHERN IRELAND. HOWEVER, I BELIEVE THAT SUCH APPREHENSION HAS MADE FAR TOO MUCH OF A SIMPLE EVENT WHICH SHOULD BE VIEWED IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY REALITY IN THIS ISLAND. HISTORICAL ACCIDENT DOES, INDEED, PLACE THE PRIMATE'S HEADQUARTERS JUST ACROSS THE BORDER. I AM AWARE THAT THIS IS TECHNICALLY WITHIN THE TURF OF MY LONDON COLLEAGUES, BUT FOR ALL PRACTICAL PURPOSES THIS IS AN EVENT WHICH IS ALMOST PURELY IRISH IN EFFECT AND IN SYMBOLIC IMPORTANCE. SHANNON

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